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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MUTHANNA PRT: LONG SHADOW OF IRANIAN INFLUENCE  
CAUSES ISCI DIVIDE IN MUTHANNA PROVINCE

REF: A. 07 BAGHDAD 3221  
[1](#)B. 09 BAGHDAD 2032  
[1](#)C. 09 BAGHDAD 1203  
[1](#)D. 09 BAGHDAD 3334

Classified By: PRT Team Leader John Kuschner for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Muthanna reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (S) SUMMARY: Muthanna PRT Team Leader met with Provincial Council Chairman Lateef Hassan al-Hassani, at his request, on January 14 at JSS Soto. During the meeting Chairman Hassani decried what he called &Iranian heavy handedness and threats<sup>8</sup> as it orders ISCI to do its bidding, but did not list any specific objectives that Iran is pursuing in Muthanna. He stated, &Iran is only exporting evil. They are devils and cowards.<sup>8</sup> He also vaguely outlined plans for an independent and non-sectarian party based in the south that will compete in upcoming district and sub-district elections. End summary.

[1](#)3. (U) Chairman Hassani is the head of ISCI in Muthanna and is also the younger brother of the province's former governor. According to Hassani and conventional wisdom amongst security officials in the province (Ref A), Iranian agents assassinated his brother in August 2007. After the murder, Hassani's family called him back to Iraq from his home in the U.K. to assume the role of family head. Hassani is well respected in the wider community where he is seen as an honest politician who seeks to better the lives of his constituents. The PRT enjoys an excellent relationship with him and his office.

[1](#)4. (S) Hassani's request to meet with the PRT was precipitated by threatening telephone calls he received from someone who identified himself as an Iranian agent. In the meeting, the Chairman began his remarks by describing the political dynamic in Kurdistan, with the new Goran &Change<sup>8</sup> party taking votes away from the more traditional KDP and PUK parties (Ref B). He stated that a similar phenomenon is needed in the Arab south to compete against the established parties that rule in Baghdad, which he termed corrupt and those who run them, &thieves.<sup>8</sup>

[1](#)5. (S) Hassani noted that other politicians in the south share his frustrations with the ruling parties and the role of Iran in the political process. He did not mention any of the frustrated politicians by name. The PC Chair outlined his intention to help create a new political party after the national elections that will be independent and free of Iranian influence and the corruption of the ruling parties in Baghdad. When asked, Hassani acknowledged that he has only had informal discussions and that nothing official has occurred. He intends to have this new movement compete in the next district/sub-district elections with a goal of having a fully functioning party in time for the next provincial and national elections. He strongly believes that such a party would receive wide public support. Even so, there is no plan to lead a split before the March 7th elections. (NOTE: Municipal and district elections will

likely be held in autumn of 2010. END NOTE.)

¶6. (S) Hassani described to PRToffs his dissatisfaction with ISCI. He believes ISCI members in Diwaniyah are still angry with him over the deal he cut to elect Governor Ibrahim Salman Al-Mayali (Da,wa). (Ref C) They believe the fallout resulted in ISCI losing Najaf. Hassani lamented what he described as the dictatorial manner of ISCI leadership in Baghdad and their Iranian masters.<sup>8</sup> He calmly noted, &Iran is only exporting evil. They are devils and cowards. With a strong government we can protect ourselves.<sup>8</sup> The Chairman characterized Iran,s activities in Iraq as self-serving, pointing to the recent border dispute over Qself-serving, pointing to the recent border dispute over Iran,s seizure of Fakkah oil well in Maysan province (Ref D). Hassani observed that he sought neither the enmity of Iran nor its interference.

¶7. (S) Hassani requested that the PRT relay one request to USG policy makers ) that U.S. foreign policy support the formation of new political movements in Iraq. He asserted that this will be the encouragement needed to energize a groundswell of support. PRT members advised him that, while the USG could not support any individual party, the USG supports the democratic process in Iraq. Any party formed with a non-sectarian, nationalistic, anti-foreign-intervention policy would be a welcome contribution to that process.

¶8. (S) When asked directly if he feared for his safety since brokering the solution to the gubernatorial impasse, Hassani replied affirmatively. Hassani told PRToffs that he will not resign and return to his family in the U.K. because as PC Chairman he is able to help the poor and needy of his province. He closed the discussion on this topic by saying that it was his family that brought ISCI into Muthanna and it was now time for change.

¶9. (S) COMMENT: Chairman Lateef Hassan Hassani is clearly disillusioned with ISCI and angry about what he described as heavy-handed Iranian interference in Iraqi politics. His as-yet-unannounced decision to leave ISCI appears to signal that the party is losing favor among its provincial elites. It will be interesting to see if this is reflected in election results. Hassani may seek to highlight ISCI,s failures and capitalize on anti-Iranian sentiment among the public in Muthanna during local elections later this year, particularly if he follows through with his plans to create a new political party. End comment.

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